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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **AVIA® NAPA APPOINTS CHRIS AKEN AS NEW EXECUTIVE CHEF**

*Chef Envisions Small Plate Tastings ‘Without Limitations’  
Inspired by Rich Culinary Tradition, Local Ingredients and the Many Flavors of Napa Valley*

*Seasonal Holiday Menu Now Available*

Wichita, KS – (November 18, 2009) – AVIA Napa, the second in a collection of four carefully-developed new-concept boutique hotels from LodgeWorks, L.P., has appointed Chef Chris Aken as its new Executive Chef. Offering a background in classic French Cuisine garnished with an eclectic mix of styles from work in Oklahoma City, Chicago, San Francisco and the Napa Valley region, Aken promises “big things” at the AVIA Kitchen + Wine Bar.

With almost a decade of experience in the Napa Valley region, Aken comes from his post as opening Executive Chef at AKA Bistro where he helped establish a popular local following. He also recently served as a local entrepreneur, owning and operating his own boutique catering company, Toast Catering, with his wife and longtime business partner, Kathleen. Prior to this business venture, Aken served as Executive Chef and Partner at Jack London Lodge from 2006-2008 and Stomp at the Mt. View Hotel from 2004 to 2006. It was at the Mt. View Hotel’s Catahoula, that Chef Chris first brought his cuisine to the Napa Valley area in 2002.

Aken, originally from Southern California, began his career in Oklahoma City as a culinary apprentice under Master Chef Kurt Fleischfresser in 1995. As his culinary mentor, Fleischfresser taught him the intricate details and pedigree of classic French Cuisine, to which Aken declares an

essential tool in every aspect of his work. In addition to the Master Chef, Aken attributes his inspiration for becoming a Chef to his ultimate desire to “spread his wings,” which he did in 1998 to serve as Chef Tournant at La Folie in San Francisco. However, it was his transition from the culinary world in San Francisco to Chicago in 2000 that he describes as an “eye opening experience,” from observing the work of Chef’s who were not afraid to “push the envelope.”

At AVIA Napa, Aken expects to push the envelope a bit himself, offering a farm-to-table concept of small plates with a Napa feel, reflecting fine dining and wine country cuisine. By infusing local styles and ingredients with classic dishes and personal specialties, Aken promises not to hold anything back from the culinary experience of AVIA guests.

In keeping with the company’s “living well on local time” philosophy, Chef Chris and his team will work with local purveyors, companies, and the local community garden – which his wife Kathleen maintains – to develop the epicurean delights on the AVIA menu. Dishes such as signature homemade pastas, portabella fries served with black truffle aioli, hand made-to-order mozzarella and meat and cheese spreads have been among some of the guest favorites at the AVIA Kitchen + Wine Bar thus far.

In celebration of the upcoming Thanksgiving Holiday, AVIA is featuring a specialty menu on Thursday, November 26, complete with three courses and complimentary bubbles for \$45 per person, or \$65 per person with course wine pairing. Thanksgiving menu options include seasonal specialties such as Cinderella Pumpkin Soup and Pan Roasted Day Boat Scallops in a Celery Root Puree to start; Hand Made Potato Gnocchi with Butter Poach Lobster and Foraged Mushrooms; a Grilled Bistro Filet with Savory Bread Pudding and Braising Greens; and of course the Traditional Turkey Dinner with cranberry, stuffing, green beans, potatoes and gravy. Guests can top it off with a choice of Warm Chocolate Cake, Pumpkin Crème Brulee or Pumpkin Cheese Cake, for dessert.

AVIA Napa taps into the insiders’ best of California’s most famous wine region to gain insight and advice to the best of Napa. The hotel is centrally situated downtown within walking distance to tasting rooms, restaurants, local hotspots and some of the world’s best vineyards. “The location, the décor and the feel of AVIA are like nothing else in the Valley,” says Aken. “It is an atmosphere that truly draws you in.” According to Aken, seasonal and specialty holiday menus will be frequent at AVIA as he plans to incorporate local flair with some not-so-traditional and traditional holiday dishes.

### **About AVIA**

AVIA is a new boutique hotel collection from LodgeWorks, L.P. of Wichita, Kansas. Launched in September 2007, AVIA infuses sophisticated, locally inspired designs and an imaginative service culture crafted to bring authentic moments of discovery to discerning travelers. LodgeWorks has teamed with accomplished boutique hotel designer Colum McCartan and other industry innovators to create the AVIA presence. Highlighted by local flavor and an air of discovery, the AVIA experience embodies “the art of living well” that is sought by boutique hotel travelers. In addition to Savannah, AVIA has opened in Napa and Long Beach, California and is scheduled to open a fourth location at The Woodlands, north of Houston, TX in late 2009. For more information, visit [www.aviahotels.com](http://www.aviahotels.com).

### **About LodgeWorks**

LodgeWorks, L.P., is a privately held hotel development and management company in the midst of an exciting portfolio expansion. Based in the American heartland, the LodgeWorks® team has a rich history as hospitality brand innovators with industry-leading guest satisfaction, sophisticated development acumen, and an experienced team that has successfully collaborated for more than 20 years. Among recent developments, the company has announced AVIA®, a new boutique hotel collection with sophisticated, locally-inspired designs and an imaginative service culture crafted to bring authentic moments of discovery to discerning travelers. LodgeWorks has also introduced comfortable luxury to the upscale suite category with the innovative refresh of Hotel Sierra® (previously branded Sierra Suites® Hotel). The new brand celebrates contemporary design and unexpected touches of luxury. LodgeWorks is also expanding its portfolio of owned and managed branded hotels including Hyatt Summerfield Suites®, Hyatt Place®, Aloft®, Hawthorn Suites®, and Hilton Garden Inn®. For more information, please visit [www.aviahotels.com](http://www.aviahotels.com), [www.hotel-sierra.com](http://www.hotel-sierra.com) or [www.lodgeworks.com](http://www.lodgeworks.com).

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Images of AVIA Hotels are available upon request.